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How to Avoid Being a Stupid Tourist

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How to avoid being a Stupid Tourist

By: KELLY MANTICK Design: AMBER OPPELT

Mouths agape and hands clutching digital cameras set on rapid fire, tourists attract certain unflattering dogmas, most of which are responsible for the big red target on their backs that can be seen by all of the eye-rolling locals. The disdain and danger for doe-eyed tourists or newcomers only increases with the size of the city. When moving to New York City, Los Angeles, or Chicago, blending in can be particularly tricky, but with these tips from true locals, you can sit back and laugh at the woman who gasps at the price of the \$7.00 hot dog.



Chicago

"Avoid Michigan Avenue!" Jason Markley exclaims. Markley, who has resided in the Windy City for eight years, reveals that Michigan Avenue's reputation as a tourist trap is known across Chicago. Along with being particularly pricey, this area contains locals who treat tourists like the village idiot. However, if you can't live without a trip to the Gap, Markley recommends name-dropping a favorite bar in your neighborhood or another slice of information that would identify you as a Chicagoan.

From an experience in which a clueless woman tapped Markley on the shoulder for directions to Al Capone's home in the middle of a house-less, bustling part of the city, Markley offers a two part piece of advice. "Yes, Chicago had a mafia—still does—but that does not mean Al Capone drips off every corner of the city." In other words, don't assume that you will be seeing Al Capone's haircutter in the middle of Chicago and don't try to find a local who will point you along your way. Markley continues on, emphasizing, "Never touch a stranger in the city if you don't want to get punched, spit on or screamed at."

"Get to know the grid," Markley counsels, referring to the numerical system of Chicago's street layout. Beginning with zero north/south and east/west at State and Madison, every 800 block from this central location marks one mile. The numbers work north and south or east and west. Markley further explains, "If I live at 1600 North State Street, I know that I'm exactly two miles from downtown [State and Madison]." Living at 425 W. Surf means you are a half mile west of State and Madison. Once you master the grid system, a quick glance at any address will tell you exactly where in the city you are at and, most importantly, how far you are from the excitement of downtown Chicago.

New York City

"Before moving to New York City, **exercise!**" laughs Claudia Vela, who has been a resident of New York City for over four years. Living in the Financial District a block from Ground Zero, Vela explains that residents of NYC must walk everywhere, even to partake in public transportation. The walking conditions can include humidity, wind, rain, snow, human traffic, and taxis will not always be readily available to relieve your weary feet. Allowing for these weather conditions is vital, especially on your way to work where arriving late and sweaty is typically frowned upon.

"Keep in mind that **New York City is always going to be more expensive than you think.** There are all types of hidden costs," warns Vela. Vela recommends allowing room in your budget for these unpredictable expenditures and chatting with friends or family in the area who might be able to share some of their financial wisdom.

"Are no secrets in NYC," Vela admits cryptically. She reveals that everyone knows the best nightlife locations and restaurants. Even the real estate market is equally as scouted out. "If you are going to pay low rent," Vela warns, "it is because there has to be something wrong with the apartment. What I mean is that in NYC, it is what it is."

Finally, one of the most important aspects of living in NYC is to **stay focused**, keeping your eyes locked on your goals and objectives. "NYC is like a big buffet," Vela smiles, "you can eat and eat all types of food, and by the time you decide to eat your favorite food, you might be full." However, beware of the extreme ambitiousness of New Yorkers. "In NYC, you have to be aggressive, even to buy shoes."

L.A.

"Don't be surprised by the amount of roaches you will find in any place you live in at first. It's not dirty, it's just reality," Tami Lane reveals of the dazzling Los Angeles scene. Lane, who moved to L.A. two weeks after college graduation in 1996, has stayed in various areas of L.A. While she admits that living in Hollywood is an exhilarating experience, areas just outside of L.A., such as Los Feliz, Culver City, and around local universities, offer much more affordable housing.

"Don't think that everybody living in L.A. has a chip on their shoulder," Lane states. She affirms that most Los Angelenos possess a courteous and affable air. "It's usually assholes from Wisconsin that move to L.A. and think that being uppity is the way L.A. works. It's not!" she adds, a sardonic bite in her voice.

"The thing about L.A.," Lane begins, "everybody has a different story; **there is no formula for breaking in**, and there is no star on a map that says 'start here.'" Lane herself started off her career painting sets for the UCLA Opera. Now, with an Oscar for special effect makeup on her mantel and work on hundreds of blockbuster movies under her belt, Lane looks back and advises, "You just have to put your butt in your car—and you will need one because L.A. is too big and the public transportation is next to nothing—and get there. It's not for the faint hearted." As a parting word of counsel, Lane expresses that it is up to you to find the opportunity. So get those stars out your eyes and go all ready!